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PROJECT ON DEFENSE ALTERNATIVES

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Assessing the 2010 QDR: a guide to key issues

Project on Defense Alternatives

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FORCE SIZE AND STRUCTURE

What conflict scenarios serve as the anchor points for the QDR?

In each case:

- What is at stake for the United States?
- What is the magnitude of threat capabilities? How precise is their calibration?
- Is the threat current, emerging, or prospective?
- Are distinctions made between greater and lesser threat scenarios?

FORCE SIZE AND STRUCTURE

- How do current US capabilities match the key scenarios?
- Where are the supposed gaps and shortfalls?
- How does the QDR change the balance?

OP TEMPO

Today's military is stressed by having nearly 25% of the full time military overseas, including 16% in overseas operations.

- How does the QDR seek to reduce the stress of overseas stationing and deployment?

In recent years large counter-insurgency campaigns have demanded much of the military's attention and energy.

- Is the QDR preparing for more of the same in the future? At what scale and frequency?

FORCE DEVELOPMENT

How does the QDR prioritize among preparing for:

- Future “peer” or “near-peer” foes
- Mid-level conventional wars (Desert Storm)
- Counter-insurgency
- Counter-terrorism
- Counter-proliferation

FORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Does the QDR plan to rebalance today's allocation of assets between conventional and irregular warfare, to what extent, and how soon?
- Is rebalancing seen as an adaptation to the requirements of operations in Afghanistan or as a more permanent change?

MODERNIZATION AND PROCUREMENT

Regarding possible future large-scale threats, how does the QDR prioritize among these options?

- Maintaining and continually modernizing large fleets of legacy systems;
- Building large fleets of new systems; and
- Building prototypes of new systems and preparing to reconstitute as needed.

MODERNIZATION AND PROCUREMENT

- How closely do modernization and procurement plans track to an assessment of actual and emerging threat capabilities?
- Does the QDR present a modernization plan that is, in its totality, coherent and consistent with strategic priorities?

JOINT DEVELOPMENT

The GAO, CRS, and CBO routinely cite shortfalls in “joint” capabilities. Previous QDRs cite greater service “jointness” as a pivotal goal.

- How does the new QDR advance joint capabilities and joint acquisition?

Developing joint communications – a common all-service nervous system – is a key component of a “networked” military.

- Does the QDR emphasize this idea and promise specific advances in joint “networking”?

BALANCING RESOURCES AND RISK

The 2008 National Defense Strategy calls attention to “Institutional Risk”:

DoD is already a complex organization. We must guard against increasing organizational complexity leading to redundancy, gaps, or overly bureaucratic decision-making processes.

- How does this QDR address the risks of excessive complexity?
- Does it propose specific reforms to reduce the costs of redundancy?

BALANCING RESOURCES AND RISK

If economic and political conditions necessitate effective limits to defense spending, the scale and complexity of the force structure will tend to trade against timely modernization, sizing, provisioning and training of the force.

- What does the QDR add to the "buy list"?
- What does it subtract?
- Is there a convincing match between the proposed posture and the proposed budget?

ACQUISITION REFORM

The GAO routinely faults acquisition efforts for producing items that are over cost, over schedule, and less capable than promised.

- How well does the QDR address this problem?

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REFORM

DoD “...cannot adequately account for its spending or assets”

~ Gene Dodaro, US Acting Comptroller General, 2007.

- How does the QDR propose to put DoD’s finances in order?

DEFENSE REFORM & TRANSFORMATION

- Does the QDR create, fund, and empower joint authorities to oversee reform and transformation efforts?

THE PROJECT ON DEFENSE ALTERNATIVES AND THE QDR

Since 1996 the Project on Defense Alternatives (PDA) has engaged the national defense review process by publishing assessments of each Quadrennial Defense Review, the Report of the National Defense Panel, and the earlier Bottom Up Review. These reports are available at:

<http://www.comw.org/pda/usdefpolicy.html>

PDA also publishes the **Defense Strategy Review Page**

- <http://www.comw.org/wordpress/dsr/> -

where we regularly compile and organize documents, reports, articles, and commentaries related to the defense reviews and national strategic issues.

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